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GROUP GUIDANCE IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.

BY- SCHMIDT, WESLEY I.

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GROUP WORK IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL IS AN EFFECTIVE METHOD FOR DEALING WITH THE INSTRUCTIONAL ASPECTS OF GUIDANCE AND OF ASSISTING CHILDREN WHO SHOW A DEFEATING SELF-CONCEPT OR AN INABILITY TO RELATE TO OTHERS. GROUP WORK IS AN EFFICIENT WAY OF DEALING WITH GROWING NUMBERS OF MALADJUSTED CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS. THE FORCE OF THE PSYCHOLOGICAL GROUP IS POWERFUL AT THE ELEMENTARY LEVEL. GROUP FAILURE IS CAUSED BY IGNORANCE OF THE DYNAMICS OF HUMAN INTERACTION. SUCH DYNAMICS ARE DESCRIBED, AS ARE THE ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL GROUP. GROUP WORK CAN FURTHER THE STUDENT'S KNOWLEDGE OF THE SELF-CONCEPT, THE WORLD OF WORK AND EDUCATION, AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SELF AND WORLD. THESE OBJECTIVES ARE ACHIEVED AT THE INSTRUCTIONAL LEVEL THROUGH SUCH ACTIVITIES AS WRITING AND TELLING STORIES, AND MAKING BIOGRAPHICAL STUDIES. GROUP GUIDANCE EMPHASIZES THE NEEDS OF STUDENTS AND ADJUSTMENT TO THE SCHOOL SETTING THROUGH GET-ACQUAINTED METHODS, LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, AND ROLE PLAYING. SMALL GROUP COUNSELING DEALS MORE WITH PROBLEMS OF ATTITUDES TOWARD SELF AND SELF DEFINITION. THE INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAM AND GROUP GUIDANCE PROVIDE DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITIES FOR ALL STUDENTS AND ALSO SERVE TO TEACH STUDENTS ABOUT THE RANGE OF GUIDANCE SERVICES AVAILABLE. ALL GROUP ACTIVITIES HAVE GUIDANCE POTENTIAL. THE GROUP IS A MAJOR DETERMINANT OF SCHOOL ADJUSTMENT. THIS IS ONE OF THE REPORTS FROM THE ZION CONFERENCE AND THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DEMONSTRATION CENTERS INCLUDED IN "ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GUIDANCE IN ILLINOIS." (PS)

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ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GUIDANCE IN ILLINOIS

Reports from the Zion Conference and
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Prepared By

Department of Guidance Services
Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction

Issued By

Ray Page
Superintendent of Public Instruction

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GROUP GUIDANCE IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Wesley I. Schmidt *

Basing his presentation on a socio-psychological definition of "group", Doctor Schmidt presents a useful outline and schema for group work in the elementary school. The suggested list of group activities and the bibliography of group guidance aids are especially helpful in program development.

INTRODUCTION

Group work is an exceedingly practical concern of guidance workers, especially at the elementary level. Why?

1. Group work appears to be one of the more effective methods of dealing with the instructional aspects of guidance.

2. Group work is frequently the most effective means of assisting children whose lack of school success is due to a defeating self-concept or inability to relate readily to others.

3. The force of the psychological group is nowhere more evident in public school classrooms than at the elementary level. With departmentalization and ability tracking, genuine group activities are less and less frequently possible in the junior and senior high school classroom.

4. The elementary child perceives school life as a part of real life, not separate from it nor preparatory for it.

5. The inherent efficiency of group work in dealing with increasing enrollments and the rising numbers of maladjusted or dysfunctioning students has obvious appeal.

WHEN IS A GROUP NOT A GROUP

Why are some groups effective in molding behavior and others not?

Why do some classes achieve cooperative efforts while others fail?

The most common reason for group failure is our inability as leaders

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*Doctor Wesley I. Schmidt is Associate Professor of Education in the Counselor Preparation Program, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb.

to allow genuine group attitudes to form. It is usually assumed that because we have an assembly or an audience of a similar grade or age range, that we have, indeed, formed a group. The dynamics of human interaction are not that simple.

A group exists to the degree that:

1. Each member has a genuine understanding of the common goal, purpose, or objective of the group.

2. Each individual feels the need to achieve that common purpose.

3. There is genuine dependence and strong sense of identification among members in support of each other in achieving their goals with status and role assignments given to each member.

4. There is a set of ground rules, values, or norms (implicit or explicit) by which all members play and work.

It is recognized that each factor exists in degree. Upon the degree of its presence an effective, powerful, influencing group exists. Where purpose, identity, commitment, values, and status assignments do not exist, a genuine group dynamic is not at work.

Elementary teachers differ in their abilities to allow a real group, with its attendant esprit de corps, cohesiveness, and power to form. Superior teachers have long recognized and understood group needs as well as individual needs of children. Poor teachers have felt the power and effectiveness of the group in its negative fury, and have been frustrated in their attempts to deal with it. Many teachers, observing this, have tried to avoid the group dynamic and have maintained an uneasy, personal control over the class by making all significant rules and decisions.

To the degree that a socio-psychological group exists, and to the degree that the group has seized the guidance ideal of personal and group development, the group guidance effort will be successful.

WORTHY OBJECTIVES

What are the primary purposes of group guidance?

What is it that is to be achieved?

What kinds of behavior change are desired?

For ready reference and a beginning point in program development, group work in school may be viewed as providing experiences which further the understanding of:

1. The self-concept or self-definition (Who am I?)
   - What are my primary interests, hopes, goals and abilities?
   - Do I generally like and accept others?
   - How do I expect others to react to me?
   - How do I effect others?
   - Who are my models?

2. The world of work and education (What am I aiming toward?)
   - What do fathers do?
   - What do mothers do at home and away?
   - What is their day like?
   - What is a career girl?
   - What is a business or company?
   - How do people get to those positions?

3. The self in the world of work and learning (How do I become?)
   - What kind of person do I want to be?
   - With what kind of people do I want to work and play?
   - What kind of life pattern will best suit me?
   - Where do I belong?
   - How can I become the kind of person or worker that I want to be?
   - How do my school subjects fit in my scheme of happiness?
   - How will success today relate to success tomorrow?

This list of sub-topics and questions is not exhaustive, but only illustrative of the kind of concerns which children have about themselves and their world of rapidly expanding perceptions. Implicit in these suggestions is the belief that adaptability and independence as a student (and growing person) are related to acceptance of self in the present life of work and learning. In addition, it is held that these concepts are frequently best developed in the group context.

THREE LEVELS OF ACTIVITY

Guidance objectives may be applied to the major group settings within the school-- groups for regular instruction within the established curriculum, groups having guidance emphasis, and small group counseling.

I. The Instructional Level

Elementary teachers have long been implementing guidance principles in the classroom. Excellent teaching of subject matter when coupled with a warm relationship with children provide the climate in which self-understanding and purposeful learning may take place. Empathic elementary teachers have long known that the development of good students and citizens is possible through such practices as:

frequent praise
showing real interest
listening for meaning
starting with the child as is
setting limits, firm and fair
knowing when to be near or absent
recognizing causes and consequences with children
enjoying creative acts
individualizing whenever possible
expecting the best
making success possible
individual evaluation
sharing joys and woes freely

In the subject centered class, considerable experience in the understanding of self, others, work, life and learning patterns may be achieved. No specific subject or activity has a corner on guidance, though English and social studies have close affinity. Successful instructional activities which have been observed to complement the guidance effort in schools have included:

A. Writing and telling stories, fictional or true, about:
   - wishes
   - earliest recollections
   - favorite people
   - embarrassing situations
   - what I'd do forever
   - when I'm afraid
   - things I do well
   - when I grow up

B. Reading and interpretation of prose and poetry
   - What was the purpose of this person's life?
   - Why did he act that way?
   - What did his action cause others to think?
   - How do you suppose he felt when that event happened?
   - This paragraph says one thing and means another, why?
   - Where are you in this picture? Where would you like to be?
   - Do you like this person? Why?
   - How would you recognize him if you met him?

C. Studies of people who have achieved, biography and autobiography

Their home life	Promotion
Their work life	Investment
Occupational hazards	Types of work
Occupational benefits	Leadership
Pay	Greatness

D. In creative art forms, in music, drama, sculpture, drawing, etc.

What feelings are expressed?
What attitude toward others is shown?
How can this art form become more imaginative?
How did you feel when doing this?
Does it tell or look as you wanted it?
What work is like this?

E. In recreation

When is competition fair or unfair?
How do I feel about losing? Winning?
When is a game fun for everyone?
What occupations and business are recreational?

II. Guidance Emphasis

Group guidance activities bring primary focus and attention on the group, its perceptions and needs, as opposed to the subject matter emphasis of instructional level group work. Although activities and questions listed at the "instructional level" may be included here, the emphasis of the experiences shifts to the needs of students and their efforts toward making a continuing adjustment to the school setting. In these activities the group conceives, provides primary direction to, and evaluates each project in terms of its intrinsic worth and group progress--in short, these activities are dictated by the group dynamic.

The demands for group guidance are frequently organized under such headings as:

1. Relationships with others
2. Self-understanding
3. Self appraisal information
4. Educational information
5. Vocational information

Considerable imagination, creativity, and student-teacher-community involvement is giving rise to a wide variety of experimental and flexible programs in group guidance. The recent availability of Federal and State funds has stimulated school districts to attempt projects and to implement ideas which were, heretofore, deemed visionary. In addition, community service organizations are becoming increasingly interested and willing to provide the necessary manpower to make classes more mobile and to extend the classroom into the community.

Some activities which have been conducted or are in the planning stage are presented as suggestions for adaptation to achieve your purposes.

1. Get-acquainted activities and games.

   a. circular methods--everyone contributes an idea, experience, or question at his turn. (Special rule to test ourselves on cooperation; You may speak, pass, or invoke silence for 5 seconds when we come to you.)

   b. "Guess who"--each child describes the child or recent event in the life of the child whose name he has drawn from the hat. The description may be written or oral. (Later in the semester you may wish to use the more sophisticated "Who are they?" technique for obtaining students' perceptions of each other with regard to objective behavior characteristics.)[1]

   c. "Changing partners"--each child has an opportunity through regularly changing partners to meet and interact with a different child in routine activities such as: passing classes, reading teams, drill exercises, etc. This approach, along with frequent seating choice, yields valuable and evolving sociometric data.

2. Leadership development

   a. "I'm the leader"--an adaptation of follow-the-leader, letting each child choose and plan one activity he would like to lead. It may be formal or informal, work or fun activity.

   b. "What should be done?"
      present an appropriate behavior problem, real or fiction

      break into brief "buzz" sessions for alternatives (each group select a leader or a reporter)

[1] See Kough, Jack, and DeHaan, Robert F., Identifying Children With Special Needs. Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1955

select a small group of "observers" to watch the groups at work and to report why some groups were able to find useful alternatives and others failed

form panel of observers and the leaders from each group to report on helpful and hindering kinds of behavior

reporters present alternative solutions

total group discussion and selection (use this general technique for small group activity)

3. Group choice and control of routine chores

4. Selection and training of host and hostess

5. Bulletin board planning and care in small groups

6. Personal development projects

   a. "What I would like to most improve"
      (1) as related to school
      (2) to home
      (3) to playmates
      (4) to sports

   b. Small group discussion of "ways to improve"

   c. Search for ideas (adults, peers, library, counselor, or other specialists)

   d. "How I am going to start improvement in ------"

   e. Periodic report to small group

7. Group creation of an after school club or activity

8. "Let's go Wishing"

   a. Examples: my greatest wish
      my three wishes
      I wish other people were...
      when I am___years old, I want to be ----

   b. May be oral, written or illustrated

   c. Let students talk or write about their wishes and reasons for that wish

   d. Group primarily accepts and reflects all feelings expressed.

9. Orientation activities, preparation for new experiences

   a. teachers exchange rooms for short lessons or activities

   b. students exchange schedules for brief periods of time

   c. "advance scouts"---a small group of students and/or adults visit a site selected for a field trip or related purposeful visit. This group reports to a class with precautions, important elements to observe, route plans, production layout and flow questions to be answered, etc.

   d. group visits to junior high school, its shops, laboratories, its other unusual features with appropriate explanation.

10. Occupational field trips to work or training sites.

   a. group questions about product or work, including usefulness, work role, personal requirements, hazards, fringe benefits, etc.

   b. objective study of field

   c. what interests are evident?

   d. what aptitudes are needed?

   e. trip preparation ("advance scouts", above), physical plans, parents help, etc.

   f. the trip

   g. evaluation of trip
      (1) roles identification
      (2) relationships
      (3) economics
      (4) dependence
      (5) personal likes and dislikes toward work roles
      (6) feeling about total experience
      (7) place of schooling, subjects, etc.

11. Open discussion (See Ohlsen, Counseling Elementary School Children, the Rogge experiment in open discussion)

12. Role Playing

   a. warm-up to role playing by play acting (doctors, cowboys, TV characters) or by freely acting out the characters of a favorite story or poem

   b. define the situation, real or fictional, life setting or prepared situation (see published materials under 13)

   c. discussion of limits of conduct but with stress on reality

d. choosing of actors
   voluntary
   group selected
   honor reluctance to participate, because it will come later
   get volunteers on their feet immediately to help select remaining actors

e. review characters and their outstanding characteristics or feelings, the problem being treated, and the importance of "Why" the actors react the way they do versus "What" they do.

f. the play itself
   may be played out, through a solution
   may be interrupted following the problem, played for a free expression of feeling, primarily by the principal players
   leave players in their places
   resume play promptly

g. discussion of the play
   new evidence on the problem itself
   how did it arise?
   how do you feel about the attempted solution?
   is it realistic? what alternatives?
   want to try it again? new actors

h. final evaluation
   why do we act and react that _____ way?
   what are the consequences?
   what was fairest?
   any general rules that will usually work in this type of situation?

13. Use of published materials

There are available considerable excellent materials to assist the elementary group worker in meeting the objectives of the program and the individual group. Those cited in the following list are those which have come to the attention of the writer and which he has found useful. The reader is cautioned against regarding it as an endorsement or a thorough survey of useful material.

Bonsall, M., Meyers, E., Thorpe L. What I Like To Do? Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1954.

Cosgrove, M. and Unruth, I. Discovering Yourself. Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1957.

Fedder, Ruth, Marden, Avis G., and Harrison, Edna L. Seeing Ourselves. Minneapolis: American Guidance Service, 1965.

Jay, Edith. A Book About Me. Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1952.

Kelner, B. G. Learn How To Study. Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1961.

Lifton, W. What Could I Be? Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1960.

Munson, Harold. My Educational Plans. Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1959.

Ojemann, R., Hawkins, A., Chowning, K., A Teaching Program in Human Behavior and Mental Health. Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1961.

Developing a Program for Education in Human Behavior, Basic manual for use with teacher handbooks, 42 pages.

A Primer in Human Behavior for Kindergarten and First Grade, illustrated; 20 pages.

NOTE: The handbooks listed below are standard notebook size, ringbound, and illustrated.

Book I, Handbook for Kindergarten and First Grade Teachers
279 pages, plus 41 full-page, black ink drawings slot-punched for removal and reinsertion.

Book II, Handbook for Second Grade Teachers
200 pages, plus bound-in copies of the following pupil workbooks: "What Do You Think? How Do You Feel?" "My Book that Grows with Me." Full-page illustrations slot-punched for removal and reinsertion.
Supplement: "Learning to Talk About Our Feelings" (pupil workbook)

Book III, Handbook for Third Grade Teachers
160 pages, plus bound-in copies of the following pupil workbooks: "Why People Act as They Do," Books I, II, III; "See What You Can Do With These," Parts I and II; "Our Modern Community"
Supplement: "The "Why's "Way to Learning" (pupil workbook)

Book IV, Handbook for Fourth Grade Teachers
190 pages, plus bound-in copies of the following pupil workbooks: "Why People Act As They Do," Book IV; "Organizing a Room Council"; "How Can We Find Cut?" "Farming--As A Business, As A Way of Life"; "Chicago--Growth of a City"

Book V, Handbook for Fifth Grade Teachers
83 pages, plus bound-in copies of pupil workbooks: "When We Meet A Problem", Booklet I; "The Needs People Have and How They May Be Worked Out"; "Why People Act As They Do", Book V; "Introducing Mental Health"; "From Colonies Into States"

Book VI, Handbook for Sixth Grade Teachers
140 pages, plus bound-in copies of pupil workbooks: "When We Meet A Problem", Booklet II; "Why People Act As They Do", Book VI; "People Are People the World Over"; "Learning to Understand Our American Neighbors" (Puerto Rico, Canada, Cuba); "How the Teacher and Pupil Work Together"; "How Are Our Relationships with Rules and Authority Figures?"

Pupil Workbooks
Why People Act As They Do
Books I, II, III, IV, V, and VI
What Do You Think? How Do You Feel?
My Book That Grows With Me (folder)
Learning to Talk About Our Feelings
See What You Can Do With These
Part I, Part II
Our Modern Community
The "Why's" Ways to Learning
When We Meet A Problem
Booklet I, Booklet II
Organizing A Room Council
The Cubs' Project
Discover My World
How Can We Find Out?
Farming--As A Business, As A Way Of Life
Chicago--Growth of a City
The Needs People Have and How They May Be Worked Out
Introducing Mental Health
From Colonies Into States
People Are People The World Over
Learning to Understand Our American Neighbors
Puerto Rico - Canada
Canada (enrichment)
Cuba
How the Teacher and Pupil Work Together
How Are Our Relationships With Rules and Authority Figures?
How Can Attitudes About Food and Growth Affect Behavior?

Reading Materials about Behavior for Use by Parents and Children in the Home (13 Narratives for the story hour; mimeo)

Senesh, L. Our Working World. Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1964.

Our Working World--Activity Book.

Our Working World--Recorded Lessons.

Shull, W. R. and Clarke, D. L. Seeing Ourselves. Washington: American Guidance Service, 1965

As each group develops and matures, it will present increasing numbers of real questions, concerns, and aspirations for group attack. These will develop to the degree that adult leadership lets the group make decisions, discoveries, and bare consequences on its own. After a sense of genuine group worth and reality are discovered, group activities and alternatives for action become more natural and less strained. Suggestions, such as those listed above as possible beginning points, become pedantic and ideas and methods will emerge as a part of the problem solving process and the group dynamic.

III. Group Counseling

This topic is well treated by Ohlsen in this publication. It is included here only for the purpose of perspective on the entire elementary guidance program.

Group counseling, as distinguished from group guidance, denotes a close, interpersonal relationship dealing primarily with the self-concept and perceptions of others. Many counselors feel that problems related to peer relations can only be resolved within a peer group, and that, with limited individual counseling, problems of attitudes toward the self and self-definition are best resolved within the group counseling setting.

A DESIGN FOR GROUP GUIDANCE

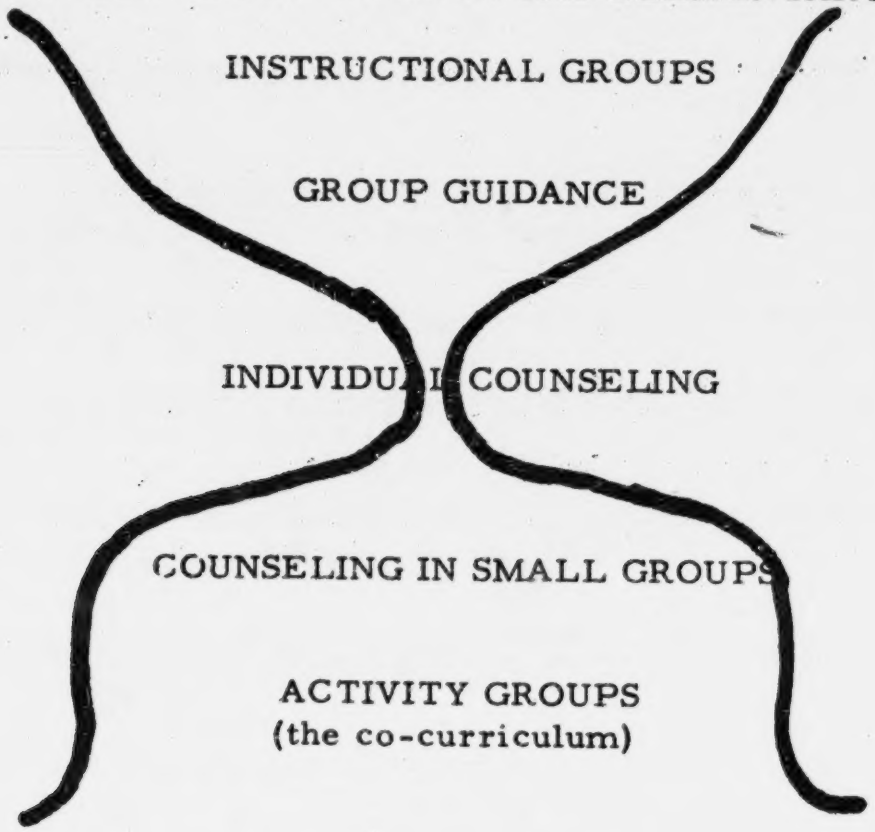
Group work in the elementary school may well be conceived as an hour glass (see diagram) through which our students flow according to their needs.

Through the instructional program and group guidance (at the top), developmental guidance activities are provided for all. Here students learn of the range of other guidance services available, including individual counseling, group counseling, and activity groups.

Many students will request individual counseling, and, where appropriate, will be referred to a counseling group of students with similar personal concerns or to an

interest-centered activity group within the co-curriculum. Many students will move directly from group guidance activities to group counseling (developmental) and to the interest-centered activity groups.

A DESIGN FOR GROUP WORK IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



SUMMARY: Every group activity of the school may be conceived as having guidance potential and implications. The elementary counselors and staff, thereby, recognize certain fundamental principles.

1. The group climate is a major determinant of school achievement, either promoting it or distracting from it.

2. A socio-psychological group atmosphere is nowhere more feasible than in the elementary school.

3. Improved peer attitudes (whether for developmental, preventative or remedial purposes) are probably best developed within the peer group.

4. [illegible] improved self concept is sometimes best developed within the peer group.

Those who enjoy children, who have learned to work with them in an empathic manner, and who have had successful experience in individual counseling, will find a new dimension of professional practice in achieving guidance values through groups.

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